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ABSTRACT

These materials are designed as four modules: geography, foods, the kitchen, and culture and are to be used singly or jointly as a unit on Japanese food and culture. Common ingredients of Japanese food, nutritional information, methods of preparation, and illustrations of utensils and eating implements are given in conjunction with cultural aspects of the food choices and cooking methods. Comparisons are made between aspects of Japanese and American foods and culture to demonstrate the similarities or differences they present. Five possible classroom activities which involve the actual preparation of foods are suggested. A list of supply houses, a bibliography, a pronounciation guide, and lists of the contents of the available accompanying artifacts kits of utensils and foods are also given. (PPB)

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JAPAN: Geography, Cuisine, and Culture

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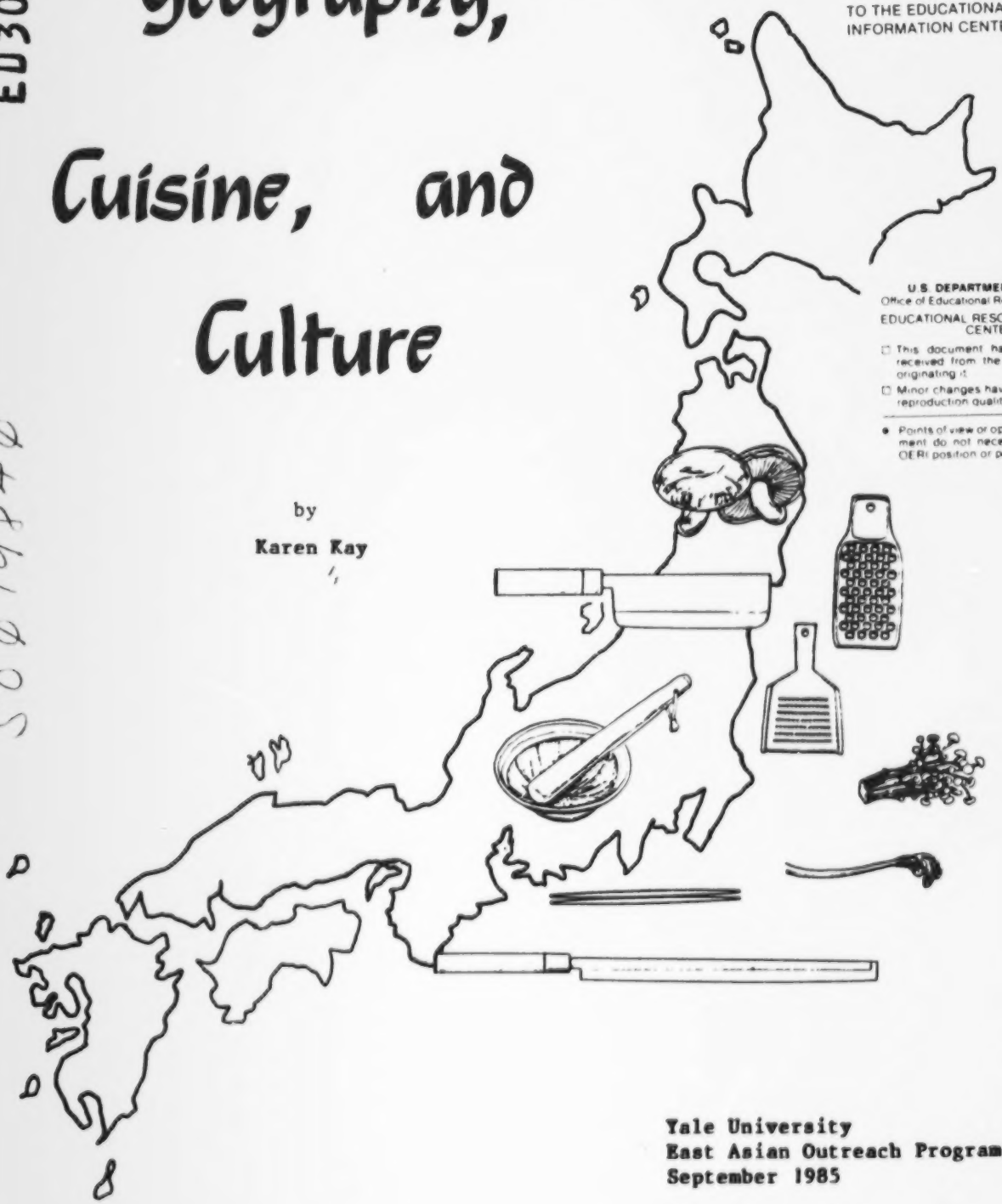
by
Karen Kay



Yale University
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NOTE ON PRONUNCIATION

Japanese words in these materials are written in the Hepburn system of romanization, which is the easiest system for native speakers of English to use.

Vowels are pronounced as follows:

a as in father

i as in machine

u as in put

e as in bet

o as in horse

Consonants are pronounced the same as in English, with the exception of r. Japanese r sounds like the r of British English "very"; that is, halfway between American English r and d. One of the chief differences between Japanese r and American English d, however, is length: Japanese r is much shorter than English d.

A macron (long mark) over a vowel indicates a vowel that is longer than usual in duration. For example, the word for "farewell" in Japanese is sayonara, but is sometimes pronounced sayōnara.

TEACHING ABOUT JAPANESE FOOD

These materials are designed as four modules--geography, foods, the kitchen, and culture--to be used either independently or together as a unit on Japanese food and culture. Pressures on a society from climate, geography, basic nutritional requirements, and the unaccountable element of taste influence the development of a particular cuisine. This unit includes background information on these influences sufficient to account for the idiosyncratic development of Japanese cuisine.

Although Japanese food has become fashionable these days, it is important to keep in mind that different choices of dishes are made for the menu of a Japanese restaurant in the United States and a Japanese restaurant in Japan. In addition, restaurant food in every country is different from home cooking not only in quality, but also in type. For example, in the U.S., we frequently eat pizza in restaurants, but we seldom make it at home. The food discussed in these materials is the type of food that is made at home.

The learning objectives of this unit are as follows:

(1) To provide geographical and historical information on Japan as they relate to Japanese cuisine.

Pictures are from Japanese Cooking: A Simple Art by Shizuo Tsuji and Good Food From A Japanese Temple by Soei Yoneda. Both are published by Kodansha International. Map 4 is from a Japan Air Lines publication.

(2) To enable identification of common ingredients of Japanese food.

(3) To present nutritional information on Japanese foods and describe methods of preparation.

(4) To enable identification of and familiarity with commonly used utensils and eating implements for Japanese food.

(5) To understand cultural aspects of Japanese lifestyles as reflected in food choices and cooking methods.

SUGGESTED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Five possible classroom activities are suggested:

(1) Making instant tōfu--simply follow the directions on the package. Water and a refrigerator are needed in addition to the contents of the package.

(2) Making "Moon Noodles"--recipe follows on the next page. A saucepan, a source of heat, and a colander are required in addition to the items contained in the Japanese Food Box and the Japanese Utensils Box.

(3) Making pickles--recipe follows on the page after next. In addition to ingredients found in the Japanese Food Box, several small Italian/oriental eggplants, or one large Western one, a large bowl or crock, a colander, a small bowl, a sharp knife to prepare the eggplant, water, sugar, salt, and a refrigerator are necessary.

(4) Making chirashizushi--recipe follows on the third page after this one. All the ingredients and utensils required are included in the Japanese Food Box and the Japanese Utensils Box, except an egg, a frying pan, carrots, and a shallow serving bowl. Chirashizushi is explained in the section on Food Items, under the general heading of sushi.

(5) With the chopsticks provided in the Japanese Utensils Box, students should try eating ALL their food for one day with chopsticks. They should be able to understand immediately how the use of knife and fork vs. chopsticks influences choices regarding the size and shape of food.

Moon Noodles

(*Tsukimi Udon*) 月見うどん

Tsukimi literally means "viewing the moon," an allusion to a genteel Japanese pastime in autumn and to the whole raw egg in the center of the dish—a full moon surrounded by "clouds" of noodles. Often those newly introduced to Japanese food decline raw egg when it appears. If it is any comfort, raw egg in Japanese cuisine is often used in such a way that the heat of a dish cooks it lightly. If you break the yolk with chopsticks or fork, then mix the egg into the hot broth, the result is similar to egg-drop soup. Use either *udon* or *soba* noodles.

4 servings

1 pound (450 g) dried *udon* noodles
4-5 cups NOODLE BROTH (see page 310)
1 cake *kamaboko* (fish paste) about 6 inches (15-cm) long (optional)
4 eggs
4 Tbsps finely chopped green onion
seven-spice mixture (*shichimi*) or red pepper flakes (*ichimi*)

To prepare: Boil dried noodles as directed on package, or follow basic directions given on page 310. Wash well with the hands under cold water to remove surface starch. Drain well.

Prepare NOODLE BROTH according to the recipe on page 310. Keep at a low simmer.

If using *kamaboko*, cut into slices about ¼ inch (¾ cm) thick.

To assemble and serve: Reheat noodles by putting individual portions in a deep, handled sieve and immersing in boiling water till hot. Place noodles in warmed deep bowls. Ladle about 1 to 1¼ cups hot noodle broth over each mound of noodles. If including *kamaboko*, arrange 2 or 3 slices at the side of the noodles in each bowl. With the back of a large spoon, make a nest in the center of the noodles in each bowl. Crack open an egg and gently drop the whole raw egg into the nest. Garnish with about 1 Tbsp finely chopped green onion. Serve immediately. Each diner may season to taste with seven-spice mixture (*shichimi*) or red pepper flakes (*ichimi*). Best eaten with chopsticks, but fork and soup spoon work.

This recipe is from page 455 of Tsuji's Japanese Coooking.

EGGPLANT PICKLES

6 small eggplants, or one very large one, seeded

2 Tbsp. salt

4 cups water

1 tsp. wasabi

3 Tbsp. soy sauce

3 Tbsp. sugar

3 Tbsp. mirin

Cut small eggplant in fourths after slicing off the stem. If a larger eggplant is used, cut into finger-sized pieces. Soak in water and salt for an hour or two to soften a bit. Drain and put into a crock or bowl. Mix all other ingredients into a paste and pour over eggplant. Turn or cover all the eggplants. Cover and refrigerate for three hours, turning once or twice.

This recipe is from page 150 of Joan Itoh's Rice Paddy Gourmet.

CHIRASHIZUSHI

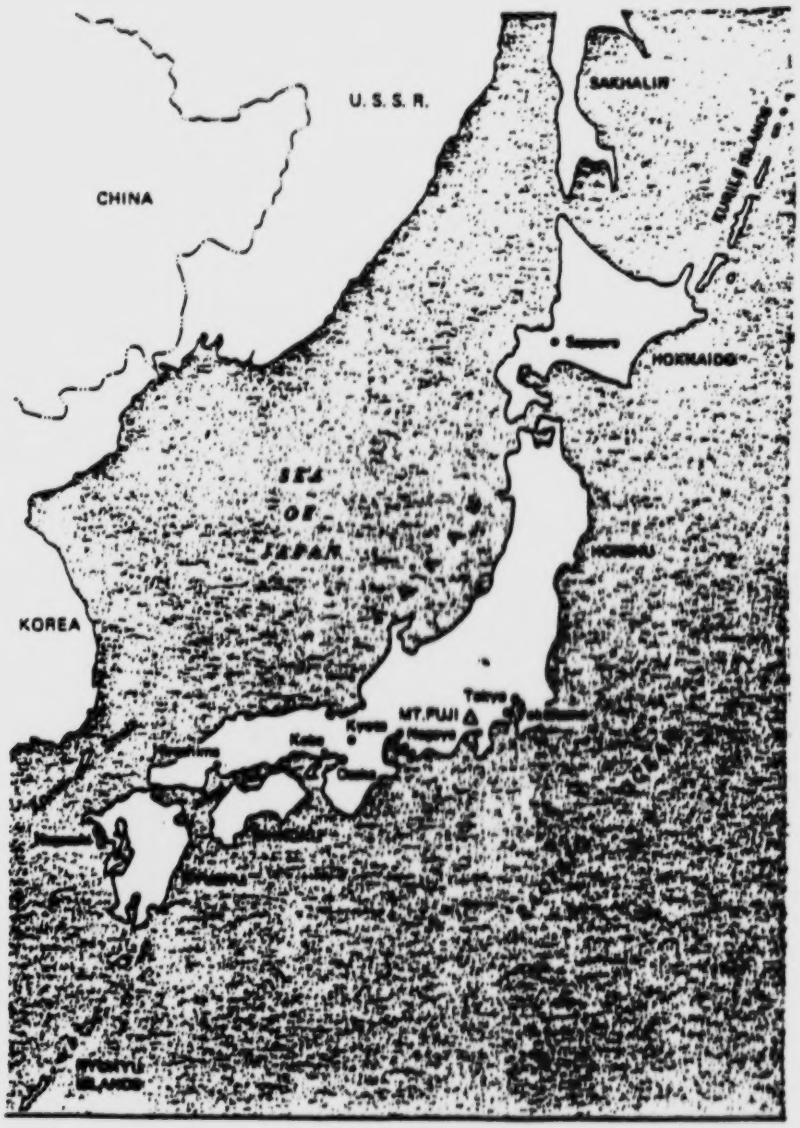
The first steps can be done in advance, and the garnishes simply added in class. To begin with, put the rice in the rice cooker; add twice the volume of water. DO NOT WASH THE RICE. Add the can of "Chirashizushi no moto", the canned vegetables and vinegared sauce. Turn on the rice cooker. When the rice is done, about twenty minutes later, let it cool in the pan. When it is cooled enough to touch, scoop it into the serving bowl. The following items will be sprinkled on top during class: carrot cut into matchstick slices, and egg cut into "golden threads". The last garnish on top of the chirashizushi is a sprinkling of small bits of nori.

To make "golden threads", mix an egg with a pinch of salt and a pinch of sugar. Grease a frying pan lightly, and when it is hot enough so it sizzles, pour the egg mixture into the pan. Tilt quickly so the egg mixture coats the bottom of the pan evenly. Cook over a low heat; when the surface of the cooked egg is almost dry, flip the egg over. Cook for a moment more, then remove the egg from the pan. If you think you will not be able to flip the egg in its entirety, then let it just cook on the one side, but loosen the bottom all around so it doesn't stick. Lay the round sheet of egg on a dry cutting board, and slice into "golden threads". Don't put the egg into a container till it is quite cool, or it will all mush together. Line the container with a double layer of paper towels first.

MODULE 1: GEOGRAPHY

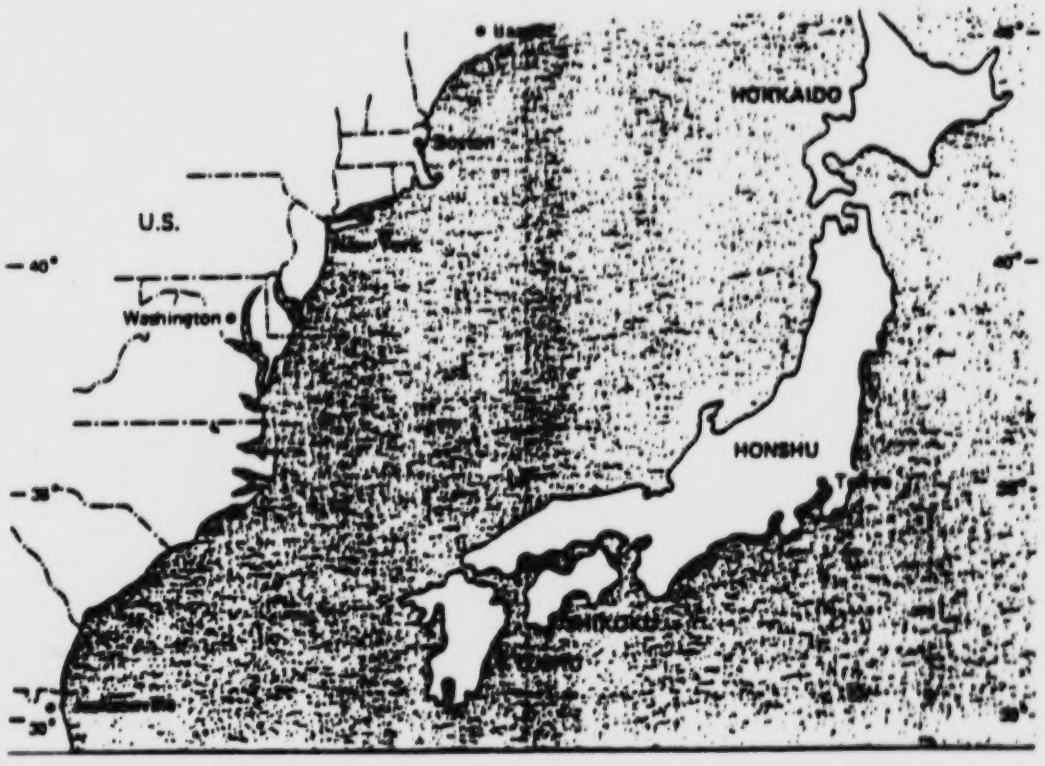
GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Japan consists of over 3,000 islands that extend from northeast to southwest for 1,360 miles. These materials are concerned primarily with the four largest islands that make up 98% of the total land area. From north to south these islands are Hokkaidō, Honshū, Shikoku, and Kyūshū.



The coast of the Soviet Union lies 186 miles from Hokkaidō, but Sakhalin Island, which is part of the Soviet Union, is only 23 miles away. Korea is 124 miles from Kyūshū across the Tsushima Straits and Straits of Korea. Tsushima Island is situated about halfway between Korea and Japan, and was traditionally used as a resting place for ships making the journey. The roughness of the sea and strong winds of the Straits of Tsushima have played a significant role in isolating Japan from the Chinese mainland.

Japan stretches from north to south within roughly the same latitudes as the Eastern Seaboard of the United States as shown below, but the climate differs significantly.



Japan's is basically a temperate climate there are four seasons, and each is almost exactly three months in length. Because of the tremendous differences in latitude between Eastern and Western Japan, it is difficult to comment on the climate of the country as a whole, so I will confine my remarks to the island of Honshū, the location of the biggest population centers.

Honshū can be divided roughly in half into two areas known as Kansai ("west of the barrier") and Kantō ("east of the barrier"). The barrier was one of the tolls on the major road between Kyōto and Tōkyo. While we know the actual physical location of the toll (Ōtsu, in Shiga Prefecture), this is not important; the importance of the barrier is historical, linguistic, and cultural. Indeed, while the original division was around Ōtsu city, and was established during the thirteenth century, this dividing line was moved much further East during the seventeenth century.

The most salient topological feature of Japan is mountains about 85% of Japan is mountains. These run down the middle of Japan like a backbone, and are the result of prehistoric volcanic activity.

Japan has roughly the land mass of California, but in 1983 had a population over five times that of California: 119,483,000 versus 23,668,049. Due to the mountains, only 15% of the total land area of Japan is available for both agriculture and housing.

Compare the distribution of land use in Japan in 1981 with U.S. figures for 1982.

Japan		U.S.*
66.8%	forest	31.1%
14.4	under cultivation --1980 56% paddy fields, 44% other	17.1
3.0	water area--rivers, lakes, etc.	no figures
2.9	residential	1.7
2.8	roads	1.2
.9	grasslands	26.2
.5	offices/stores	no figures
.4	factories	1.1
.4	meadowland/pasture	3.0
7.9	other	18.6

*U.S. figure are from Statistical Abstract of the United States. The figures for the amount of land used for residential purposes is estimated from 1974 figures. The Japanese figures come from Nihon Tokei Nenkan. See bibliography for full citations.

Note the contrast in amount of land under cultivation: the percentages are not so dissimilar, but in Japan, this figure decreases every year, while in the U.S., the figure increases. In Japan, less than 10% of the population engages in agriculture and this also decreases every year; land and labor productivity have increased steadily since World War II, till the average yield per acre is among the highest in the world. Since World War II, agriculture in Japan has gone from labor intensive to highly mechanized and capital intensive.

The mountains which constitute such a large proportion of the land area have a significant effect on the climate. Winter weather on the Japan Sea side of the island, the windward side, is much harsher than on the Pacific Ocean side, the leeward side. There is more snow on the windward side, and the winds are more

severe. In the summer, however, the windward side is cooler. The winter climate on the Pacific Ocean side of Honshū is noticeably milder than that of the Japan Sea side, and as a result most of the big cities are on the Pacific Ocean side of the island.

Part of the reason for milder temperatures has to do with ocean currents.

There are very strong gulf currents which warm up the Pacific Ocean side.

These climatic differences are reflected in the variety of crops grown in different areas, and the number of harvests.

It's been said that the Japanese stand facing the mountains with their backs to the ocean. Although fish is a major source of protein, the Japanese are farmers, and have been for over 1200 years. Part of the Taika reforms of 645, one of the earliest government documents we have, concerns itself with land reform.

AGRICULTURE

The nature of agriculture in Japan has changed over the years. Traditionally, only one rice crop is grown in northeaster Japan, but because of the warmer climate it is possible to grow two crops in southwestern Japan. The production of wheat, barley, rye, and soybeans is gradually decreasing. While these used to be alternate crops for rice, there is no need any more to grow an alternate crop, due to (1) high rice prices in Japan (the price of rice in Japan is five times the world average, because of supports) and also (2) the availability of cheap imports. Most of Japan's soybeans come from the American midwest.

An amazing variety of fruits and vegetables are grown in Japan: over four hundred species, more than most other countries. This is mostly due to the variety of climate as discussed above.

MODULE 2: TYPES OF FOOD

FOOD ITEMS

An alphabetical listing of the items contained in this section follows. Starred items are included in the Japanese Food Box.

daikon
dashi*
fish
  fish
  fish paste
gobō
kanpyō*
konnyaku*
mirin*
miso*
mochi
mushrooms
  enokidake*
  shiitake*
noodles
  soba*
  udon*
    kishimen*
  sōmen*
onigiri
rice*
sake*
seaweed
  konbu*
  nori*
  wakame*
shōga*
sushi
  norimaki, makizushi
  oshizushi
  nigirizushi
  chirashizushi
tōfu*
  cotton tōfu
  silk tōfu
  yaki-dōfu
  aburage
  kōyadōfu
tsukemono*
wasabi*

ITEM: daikon--giant white radish. It is thought to aid digestion, especially of oily foods, which is why deep-fried foods are always accompanied by some shredded daikon.

HOW IT'S MADE/GROWN: Look for daikon that has tight skin and a fresh appearance. Avoid those that seem pithy or smell too strong, or are limp, with soft, withered skins.

HOW TO EAT: When simmered, daikon tastes good with many thick sauces. Daikon flesh is dense and demands long cooking, so it may need rather long parboiling even when sliced very thin. Frequently pickled--takuan: bright yellow, crunchy, and very pungent.

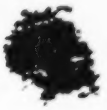
STORAGE: Keeps for about two weeks in a refrigerator.

NUTRITIONAL VALUE: The daikon itself is a rich source of Vitamin C, while the green leafy top is equally a good source of Vitamin A.

ITEM: dashi--soup stock made of dried bonito (a member of the mackerel family), called katsuo in Japanese, and konbu, a kind of giant kelp (see item below, under "Seaweed"). It is said that the flavor and quality of the dashi that season a dish determine its ultimate success or failure. Some Japanese restaurants make dashi using only bonito flakes, but traditional recipes also use konbu.

giant kelp (*dashi konbu*) for making *dashi* stock.

dried bonito (*katsuo-bushi*)



dried bonito thread-shavings (*ito-kezuri-katsuo*).

dried bonito flakes (*hana-katsuo*)

HOW IT'S MADE/GROWN: The dried bonito fillet should have an ash-white coating of mold; the densest fillets are the best. Dashi is usually made with flakes shaved from the fillet, but commercially prepared and packaged bonito flakes are also available. The konbu should not be washed before adding to the soup. The standard proportions are 1 oz. kelp and 1 oz. bonito flakes to 1 qt. water. The dashi should be brought to a full boil, but the konbu should be removed just before the water boils. Once the dashi has been brought to a full boil, the pot should be immediately removed from the heat. Once the bonito flakes have settled to the bottom, the soup should be strained and the bonito flakes removed. The konbu should be cut into two-inch slices, and then returned to the pot.

HOW TO EAT: There are various stages in the process at which one can make the decision to go instant: there is dashi in a jar, which is simply added to boiling water and no straining of bonito flakes is necessary, or you can buy bonito flakes to use with regular konbu, or you can buy instant konbu to use with store-bought bonito flakes.

STORAGE: The bonito fillet can be stored in a can in a cool, dark, dry place. The dashi may be stored in a sealed bottle in the refrigerator for up to three days. It may be frozen, but both flavor and aroma are lost; it is best when made fresh.

FISH

ITEM: fish

HOW IT'S MADE/GROWN: An essential part of Japanese cuisine.

HOW TO EAT: Usually eaten raw, or broiled in its entirety.

NUTRITIONAL VALUE: A good source of low-cholesterol protein and iodine.

ITEM: fish paste

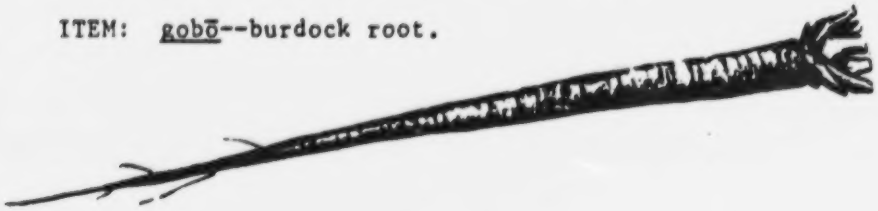
HOW IT'S MADE/GROWN: Pureed fish blended with a binding agent, molded into the desired shape, and then steamed. When cool, it is firm and approximately the same texture as bologna.

HOW TO EAT: Eaten sliced as is, or dipped in soy sauce.

KINDS: There are two principle kinds: (1) kamaboko (pictured below)--molded onto a rectangular piece of cypress wood before steaming. Frequently colored pink on the outside. (2) chikuwa--"bamboo wheels"; this type of fish paste is molded around a stainless steel rod, and is grilled to brown the outside layer. As the name implies, it used to be molded around bamboo rods.

STORAGE: Fish paste can be stored in the refrigerator for about a week.

ITEM: gobō--burdock root.

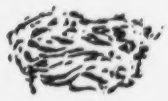


HOW IT'S MADE/GROWN: Good quality roots are firm, have unblemished skin, and are straight. The best gobō do not have the hole in the center that forms when the roots get thick. The skin is the best part of the root, so scrub with a stiff brush to clean the root instead of scraping it. Gobō is also available canned.

HOW TO EAT: Gobō turns dark very quickly after being cut, so to avoid discoloration put it immediately into plain water, or water with a touch of vinegar in it. The flavor of the gobō itself is rather neutral, but it takes on other flavors it absorbs during cooking, so it is best simmered for a long time in several liquids, or sauteed in oil. Gobō fresh from the garden tastes best, so look for roots that are firm and have no soft spots.

STORAGE: Gobō can be stored in the refrigerator, wrapped in plastic, for up to two weeks.

ITEM: kanpyō--dried gourd shavings. Bottle-calabash pith is shaved and dried in long ribbonlike strips. These buff-colored dried gourd strips have two primary uses: first, as something decorative to tie to or fasten around food gifts, and second, as something edible, namely a filling in such foods as makizushi (rolled sushi--see below).



HOW IT'S MADE/GROWN: Kanpyō is available in 1-oz. packets, which is sufficient for several recipes. To prepare kanpyō for use, wash strips of kanpyō, and knead them in an ample amount of salt. This breaks down the fibers and increases their absorbency. Wash in water, and then boil until soft. Drain.

Good quality kanpyō is flat, white, and slightly spongy. Avoid kanpyō that is yellowish, wrinkled, stiff, and dry.

HOW TO EAT: The most common use of kanpyo is as part of the filling of makizushi.

STORAGE: Kanpyō may be stored in a sealed container for up to a year.

ITEM: konnyaku--a dense, gelatinous substance with a bland flavor. Most Japanese would be unable to identify this root as such; it is never brought to market raw. Quite a bit of processing is required to bring konnyaku to a palatable state. The main ingredient of the root is mannan. Powdered and encapsulated konnyaku is sold as a diet aid in the U.S. under the name 'glucomannan'. Konnyaku varies in color from dark brown to hazy grey, and comes in the form of a slab or cake, or in the form of noodles.

HOW IT'S MADE/GROWN: Konnyaku is made from the root of Amorphophallus konjac.

HOW TO EAT: Konnyaku has a neutral flavor, and is not porous enough to easily absorb flavors from foods it is cooked with. Before using, konnyaku should be parboiled. This clarifies the flavor, and makes the jelly firmer. After parboiling, the cakes may be sliced or torn into bite-sized pieces. Torn, rough edges increase the surface area for flavors to penetrate. As noodles, it is one of the main ingredients of sukiyaki.

STORAGE: Both cake and noodle-shaped konnyaku keep about two weeks in a bowl of water in the refrigerator if the water is changed daily.

NUTRITIONAL VALUE: If you are dieting, it is a good thing to add to your menu because it has no calories. Japanese people like to eat it for its consistency, which they find pleasing. It is said to have a laxative effect, and clean out the intestines. It is often advised as a food for diabetics in Japan because it fills the stomach and cuts the appetite.

ITEM: mirin--heavily sweetened wine, like a thin golden-colored syrup, used only in cooking to add a mild sweetness and to glaze grilled foods when used in a basting sauce., Use sugar as a substitute: 1 tsp. sugar for 1 Tbsp. mirin.

ITEM: miso--fermented soybean paste.

HOW IT'S MADE/GROWN: Miso is made by crushing boiled soybeans and adding wheat, barley, or rice, and injecting the mixture with a yeastlike mold. There are three basic kinds of miso: (1) light miso, which is made using a rice mold and accounts for 70% of all miso consumed in Japan; (2) red miso, which is made using a barley mold and accounts for 20% of miso consumption; and (3) dark miso which is made using a bean mold and accounts for 10% of miso consumption. Dark miso tends to be physically denser than light miso as well as darker in color and stronger in flavor.

The period of fermentation varies from less than a month for the light yellow sweet type to up to three years for dark miso. Most Japanese people buy miso in the supermarket, but until twenty or thirty years ago, every family used to make their own.

HOW TO EAT: Every Japanese consumes a few spoonfuls a day in one form or another: as a dressing for vegetables, a pickling medium, spread on grilled foods, or in the form of miso soup.

STORAGE: Will keep up to a year refrigerated.

NUTRITIONAL VALUE: A source of protein, enzymes, and lactic acid bacteria.

ITEM: mochi--rice cake

HOW IT'S MADE/GROWN: Mochi is made from glutinous rice that has been steamed and then pounded. It is sold in sheets and either round or square pieces. It is primarily a winter food; it is the traditional food of New Year's.

HOW TO EAT: The usual way of eating mochi is simply to grill it and eat it with a flavor complement such as soy sauce or toasted nori. It will expand and puff up, somewhat like a marshmallow, and also like the latter will burn if the heat is too hot. If mochi gets very hard, dry, and full of cracks, it can be broken into small pieces and deep-fried,when it will puff up in irregular shapes. Salted, these make a good snack or nibble.

MUSHROOMS

ITEM: enokidake--whitish-yellow mushrooms.

HOW IT'S MADE/GROWN: These mushrooms have 5-inch long stems topped by tiny round caps. They are mild-flavored, have a pleasant crispness and aroma. When enokidake get old, the caps discolor, the stems sag, and the package smells like something fermenting.

HOW TO EAT: Cut off the spongy base about one and a half inches from the bottom and rinse the mushrooms in a colander before using. Enokidake are used in soups and one-pot dishes, and are excellent in salads or in stir-fried dishes.

STORAGE: Fresh enokidake keeps in the sealed plastic package for about a week in the refrigerator. They are available canned, but fresh is much better.

ITEM: shiitake--dark brown mushrooms with smooth velvety caps.

HOW IT'S MADE/GROWN: They are best when the cap is thick, the flesh firm, and the cap edges are curled under. Shiitake are available fresh or dried and packaged whole, sliced, in pieces, or crumbs, in a variety of sizes. A one ounce package holds eight to ten shiitake. Shiitake are grown commercially in large quantities by inoculating cut logs of the shii tree with spores. In season in spring and fall. Dried mushrooms must be soaked in warm water for an hour or so, and the hard parts of the stem discarded after soaking.

HOW TO EAT: Shiitake may be used any of the same ways as western mushrooms, even raw in salads.

STORAGE: Shiitake keep almost indefinitely in an airtight container.

NOODLES

Rice and noodles never served together. Noodles are not part of Japanese formal cuisine, but more noodles are probably

consumed in Japan daily than any other dish. The original Japanese fast food. Broth available canned or in bottles. You can tell when the noodles are done: "noodles are done when a piece thrown against a wall sticks and does not fall off." All types of noodles are eaten al dente.

ITEM: soba--buckwheat noodles.

HOW TO EAT: Associated with Eastern Japan. Eaten hot or cold; a typical summer food. Chasoba--green tea-flavored noodles.

STORAGE: May be stored in a dry place for up to a year.

ITEM: udon--wheat noodles of Western Japan.

HOW IT'S MADE/GROWN: Subvariety: kishimen.

HOW TO EAT: Eaten hot, usually in broth.

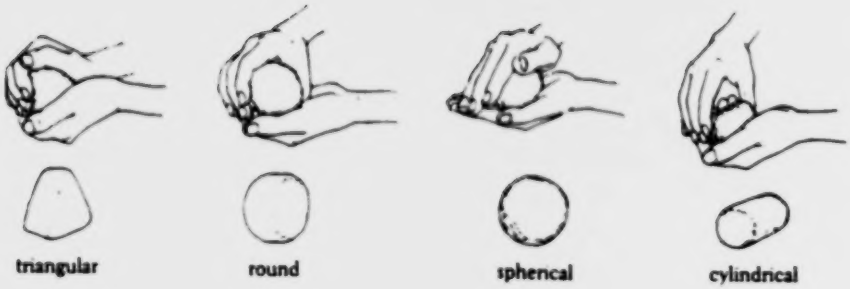
STORAGE: May be stored in a dry place for up to a year.

ITEM: somen--very thin wheat noodles; about half the size of spaghettini.

HOW TO EAT: Usually eaten iced, as a summer food.

STORAGE: May be stored in a dry place for up to a year.

ITEM: onigiri--rice ball. This is the traditional Japanese equivalent of a sandwich.



HOW IT'S MADE/GROWN: Onigiri is made with warm rice. Hands should be kept moistened with salty water to season the rice slightly and to keep it from sticking to the hands instead of forming a ball. It takes practice to make: you must press the rice enough to make sure it stays together, but not enough to squash it, which will make it harden. Typical fillings are grilled fish, pickles, and katsuo (see dashi above) flakes moistened in soy sauce. The outside may be covered in toasted sesame seeds or nori seaweed.

HOW TO EAT: Onigiri is eaten with the fingers.

STORAGE: Onigiri will not keep longer than two days, refrigerated.

NUTRITIONAL VALUE: This depends on the filling.

ITEM: rice--short grain, sticky rice.

HOW IT'S MADE/GROWN: Grown in rice paddies; one or two crops per year.

HOW TO EAT: Rice is always eaten steamed in Japan. Soy sauce or other flavorings are NEVER added to rice. Sometimes, a few flakes of seaweed may be sprinkled on top.

STORAGE: May be stored in a dry place for up to a year.

NUTRITIONAL VALUE: Rice used to be the main source of protein in Japan. It is still the main source of carbohydrate.

ITEM: sake

HOW IT'S MADE/GROWN: Made by the action of a yeastlike mold on rice. Sake acts to tenderize and enhance the flavor of foods. Note the pronunciation--it is not 'saki' but 'sake'.

HOW TO EAT: Usually drunk warm. A small amount of sake, about one-half cup, is placed in a container (such as a jar, although special containers, called tokkuri are sold for this purpose in Japan) in a pan of warm water. The water is heated till shortly

before the boiling point, and then the sake is poured into small cups.

STORAGE: Sake may be stored indefinitely.

SEAWEED: konbu, nori, wakame

The nutritional values of all three seaweeds are about the same. These seaweeds contain an incredible variety of necessary trace minerals: iodine, chlorine, copper, zinc, potassium, iron, sodium, and manganese. In fact, the average Japanese diet contains enough iodine from seaweed so that thyroid or goiter problems rarely occur in Japan.

ITEM: Konbu--kelp, or sea tangle.

HOW IT'S MADE/GROWN: Konbu is mainly harvested off Hokkaido. It grows as a deep olive brown leaf, from two and one-half to twelve inches wide, and may reach a length of many yards. The konbu leaves are dried in the sun, cut, folded, and packaged. Two-thirds to one ounce is the standard measure to season stock or broth for four servings, so one package is ample for several meals. There are a number of different grades of konbu; the more expensive grades are usually better quality.

The best konbu has smooth flat leaves that are a very dark brownish-black in color, and fairly thick. When you look at the edge of the leaf, you should be able to distinguish several

"skin" layers. Wrinkled, thin, green konbu is of poor quality. Konbu is frequently dusted with a fine white bloom; this is a kind of mold that should be there, much like the mold of blue cheese. This is why konbu should never be washed or rinsed, but merely wiped with a damp cloth. Some Japanese cooks advise lightly scoring the konbu with a sharp knife so that glutamic acid (a natural flavor intensifier present in the konbu leaf) is easily released during simmering.

HOW TO EAT: In addition to being one of the main ingredients of dashi, konbu may also be deep-fried or sauteed.

STORAGE: Keep out of sunlight and in a tightly sealed container.

ITEM: nori--laver. The dried sheet form is known as Asakusa nori.

Nori seaweed (standard-size sheets open and folded).

HOW IT'S MADE/GROWN: It was discovered in the seventh century that this dark brown alga would grow against bamboo stakes planted in Tokyo Bay. The laver was gathered, washed, and laid to dry by hand. The processing today is highly mechanized to produce the billions of sheets of nori that the Japanese consume every year. The standard size sheet is eight inches by six and seven-eighths inches. Nori can also be bought in three-inch pre-toasted strips.

HOW TO EAT: Nori should be toasted: toasting brings out the flavor and the fragrance. Pass one side only over a (gas) flame a few times till it becomes crisp. Nori is used to wrap sushi, rice balls, or rice crackers. It may be crumbled, or cut into very thin strips to be used as a garnish. It is also possible to buy nori already crumbled into small pieces in a container for shaking onto hot rice, much as we shake salt and pepper on our mashed potatoes.

STORAGE: Keep out of sunlight and in a tightly sealed container.

ITEM: wakame--lobe-leafed member of the brown algae family, prized for its flavor and texture. It is sold abroad in dried form, and is available fresh in early spring to summer.

dry *wakame* seaweed.

HOW IT'S MADE/GROWN: Dried wakame must be softened by soaking in tepid water for about twenty minutes. The spine is very tough, and should be removed after softening if not already removed in the original processing.

HOW TO EAT: Wakame is used widely in soups; it should not be simmered longer than a minute, or it will lose important nutrients. It is a good salad ingredient, and goes well with a light, vinegary dressing; it is pleasant in texture with a fresh vegetable crispness.

STORAGE: Keep out of sunlight and in a tightly sealed container.

ITEM: shōga--ginger root.

ginger root (*shōga*)

ginger shoots
(*ha-shōga*)

HOW IT'S MADE/GROWN: Shōga is a rhizome, a root. The knobs of the root should be firm, the skin unwrinkled, and it should be an even tan color all over. Shōga with wrinkled or puckered and discolored skin is too old.

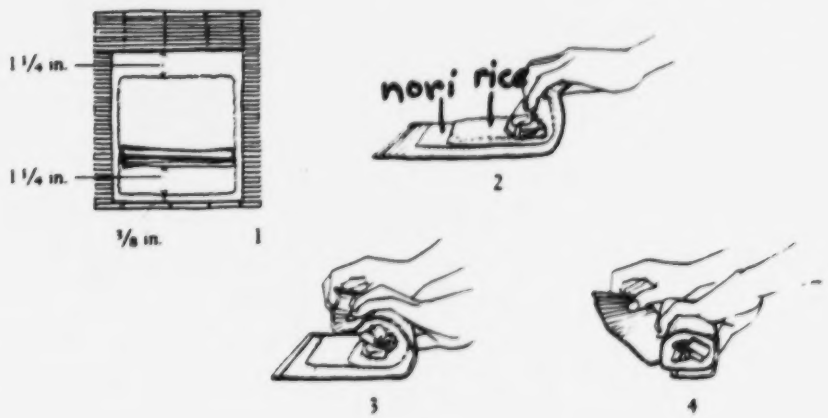
HOW TO EAT: Once you have chosen ginger root that is firm and tight, pare away only the skin of the amount you will need, and do this just before using. Shōga that has been pared does not keep. Sometimes, ginger root will mold more quickly than you expect, especially on a cut end. The moldy portion can simply be cut away. To peel the shōga, simply scrape with the blade of a sharp paring knife. If you wish simply to extract the juice from the ginger root, which is the case in most recipes, you can cut the peeled ginger root into small pieces, and put through a garlic press. The juice will come through, leaving behind fiber which is then discarded.

STORAGE: Shoga keeps well refrigerated in plastic wrap.

SUSHI

One thing that all types of sushi have in common is that they are made with vinegared rice. The rice is cooked with less water than is usual, and the rice is mixed with vinegar while it cools.

ITEM: norimaki, makizushi--these are both types of rolled sushi.



HOW IT'S MADE/GROWN: Narrow strips of seafood or crisp strips of vegetable or pickles or kanpyo are arranged on a layer of vinegared rice, which has been spread on a sheet of toasted nori, and the whole is rolled in a special mat. The roll is cut into rounds for serving. A popular new roll is "California roll", which is crab and avocado, sometimes with mayonnaise, made into makizushi. This began in California, but is now served in Japan.

HOW TO EAT: Each slice of roll is picked up with fingers or chopsticks, and dipped into soy sauce.

STORAGE: Too good to keep around for long!

NUTRITIONAL VALUE: This depends on the contents of the roll.

ITEM: oshizushi--pressed sushi.

HOW IT'S MADE/GROWN: Vinegared rice is packed into a mold and covered with marinated or boiled fish, seaweed, or egg. When unmolded, the resulting loaf is cut into bite-size slices.

HOW TO EAT: Same as makizushi.

SUSHI PLATTER
a. oshizushi; b.nigiri-sushi; c. nori-roll sushi; d. cucumber sushi roll

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ITEM: nigirizushi--hand-shaped sushi.

HOW IT'S MADE/GROWN: Nigirizushi is basically fresh fish on a tablespoonful of rice, with a dab of wasabi in between.

HOW TO EAT: Same as makizushi.

ITEM: chirashizushi--"scattered" sushi.

HOW IT'S MADE/GROWN: This is the most commonly home-made kind of sushi. It requires neither the manual dexterity of nigirizushi, nor the special mold required for oshizushi. Chirashizushi usually consists of seafood and vegetables in or on vinegared rice; the whole is topped with shredded omelette and chopped mushrooms.

HOW TO EAT: Eaten as is, with chopsticks.

TŌFU--BEAN CURD

HOW IT'S MADE/GROWN: Tōfu is made from dry soybeans which are soaked in water to soften, and then crushed and boiled. The boiled mass of beans is separated into pulp (okara) and soymilk. A coagulant is added to the soymilk to separate it into curds and whey. The warm curds are poured into molds and left to take shape. They are soaked in cold water to firm them up and later, once they are out of the mold, they are kept in cold water to keep them fresh.

It is also possible to buy "instant" tōfu, which comes with its own reusable plastic mold, which shapes the cake into the standard Japanese size cake. Although instant tōfu is more expensive than fresh, the flavor is quite good, and it is a boon to tōfu-lovers who live in areas where fresh tōfu is unavailable. The package of instant tōfu consists of one packet of powdered soymilk and one packet of coagulant. The two packets are

dissolved together in water over a low heat, poured into the mold to set, and then refrigerated.

KINDS: There are three kinds of fresh tōfu:

cotton (momen) tōfu: Tōfu from the curds of which water has been drained. Comparatively coarser and more robust than "silk" tofu.

silk (kinu-goshi) tōfu: The curds have not been drained. It is far too delicate to be pressed. This type of tōfu is often used in soups, or especially during the summer eaten uncooked, topped with with scallions, bonito flakes and soy sauce.

yaki-dōfu: Lightly broiled bean curd; it is easy to recognize by the browned surface. This type of tōfu has a very fine texture.

HOW TO EAT: When used in a salad, or as an ingredient in a stir fried dish, tōfu should first be pressed: wrap the block of tōfu in kitchen towels and place two dinner plates on top; let rest for thirty minutes to an hour. This will squeeze the excess water out of the tōfu and into the towel. Depending on the tōfu, the towel may have to be changed. Another alternative is to put the block of tōfu on a cutting board, weight it with a couple of plates, and prop the cutting board up on one end, so the excess water drains into the sink.

STORAGE: Tōfu must be kept refrigerated, and in sufficient volume of water to cover it. This water must be changed daily. Tōfu cannot be frozen without changing texture. (See kōyadōfu.)

NUTRITIONAL VALUE: Ideal for dieting: low ratio of calories to protein. Six ounces of tōfu have one hundred calories, but is six percent protein. Low in carbohydrates, and no cholesterol.

ITEM: aburage--deep-fried tōfu

ITEM: kōyadōfu--frozen tofu

ITEM: tsukemono--pickles. It has been said that "Rice and pickles are to the Japanese what bread and cheese are to the English, and French bread and wine to the French."

HOW IT'S MADE/GROWN: Salt, rice bran mash (with miso), dry rice bran, vinegar are used to pickle a variety of vegetables such as Chinese cabbage, daikon radish, radish greens, cucumber, and eggplant. It is also possible to pickle Western vegetables such as cauliflower, celery, and pimiento. The only fruit that is

pickled is the plum; this very common pickle was originally considered to be a kind of stomach medicine.

HOW TO EAT: At meals, with a little soy sauce. Frequently served first in a restaurant, almost like an appetizer. Usually free, so you can always ask for more.

STORAGE: The length of time that a pickle can be kept depends on the type of pickle it is. In general, Japanese pickles do not keep as long as Western pickles; they last a few weeks once they are opened, as opposed to a few months or, in some cases, years.

ITEM: wasabi--powdered horseradish.

HOW IT'S MADE/GROWN: Wasabi comes from a plant. It is available either in powdered form, or it can be purchased already mixed in tubes, which must be refrigerated after opening. Powdered wasabi is prepared by mixing a few DROPS of hot water with the green powder in a sake cup or shot glass until a thick paste is formed. Turn the glass upside down for about ten minutes to allow the "bite" and flavor to nature. It is difficult to judge how much water to use, which is why the tubes are so popular. Once water has been added, the only way to add more solid is to add more wasabi powder, which leads to waste.

HOW TO EAT: The biting yet fresh cleansing taste of wasabi accompanies most raw fish dishes. Scant half-teaspoonful mounds of wasabi garnish sashimi plates and are mixed to taste with the soy sauce-based dipping sauce that accompanies the dish. Likewise, smears of this spice are placed beneath the bite-sized pieces of raw fish that cover sushi.

STORAGE: Does not keep.

THE FOUR FOOD GROUPS

American nutritionists are accustomed to thinking in terms of the Four Food Groups. While the concept of the Four Food Groups was designed to remain constant across cultures, we can see how different the membership of each group is in Japan and in the U.S.

FOOD GROUP	U.S.	JAPAN
MILK	milk, cheese, yogurt, ice cream	soybean products, some milk products
MEAT	beef, pork, veal, lamb, poultry, fish, cheese, eggs	fish, some poultry, some eggs, some red meat
VEGETABLES AND FRUIT	green and yellow vegetables, tomatoes, citrus and other fruits	many of the same kinds of vegetables, plus others; not as much fruit consume in Japan as in U.S.
BREAD AND CEREAL	bread and other wheat products, breakfast cereal, corn, rice	rice in many forms; bread is becoming more popular

SOME FOODS COMMON TO BOTH EAST AND WEST

agar-agar: gelatin made from seaweed

azuki beans

bamboo shoots (a.)

Chinese cabbage (b.)

chestnuts

chrysanthemum leaves (c.)

cucumbers (d.) (Japanese cucumbers are about the same length, but half the thickness. Crisper, less watery, more tender, the skin is thinner and not as bitter as American variety. American cucumbers need to be peeled and seeded in order to be used in Oriental recipes.)

fiddlehead ferns (e.)

a.

b.

c.

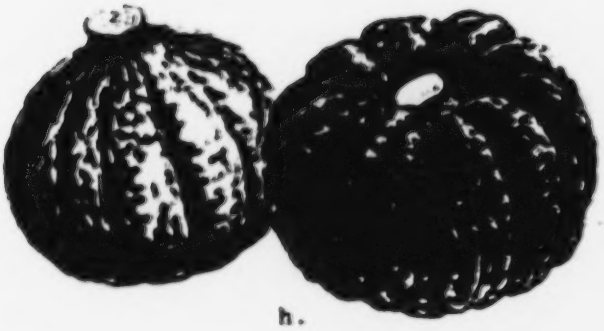
d.

ginko nuts
lily bulb
lotus root (f.)
peppers
sesame seeds
spinach (g.)
squash (h.)
vinegar
wheat gluten
yams

e.

f.

g.



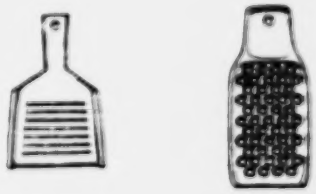
h.

MODULE 3: THE KITCHEN

KITCHEN UTENSILS

chopsticks--In Japanese, these are called o-hashi. One or two pairs of long, kitchen chopsticks, a package of disposable cedar or pine chopsticks, and a few pairs of somewhat more elegant lacquered chopsticks are good to keep on hand.

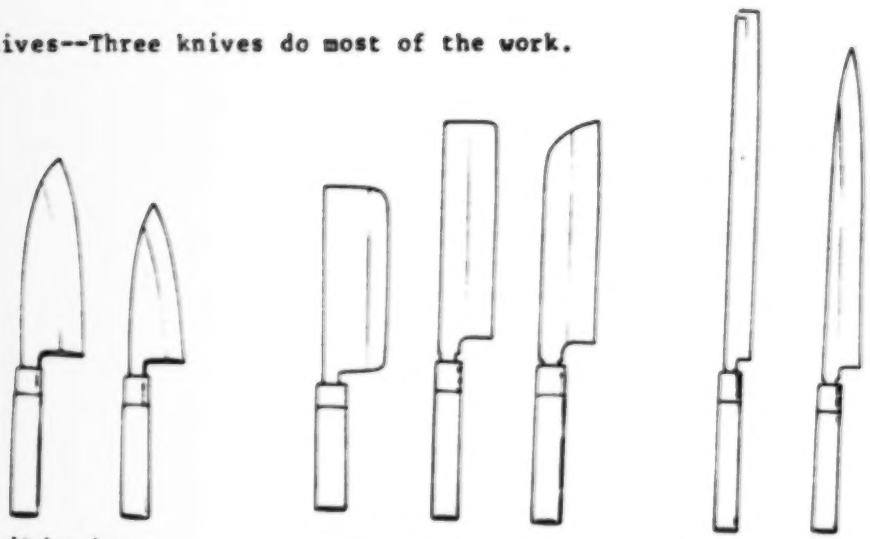
graters--Japanese graters produce a very fine grate of a pulplike consistency rather than little shreds as do western graters. Most kitchens have two graters, one rough and one fine. The tradtional grater is a flat surface punctuated by raised spikes. A certain amount of food remains caught in the spikes of the traditional grater. Be sure to clean the grater so nothing remains between the spikes. Wash in water, with a bit of salt and vinegar.



grinding bowl--mortar and pestle, called suribachi in Japanese. The motion is a sturdy, high-fired pottert bowl, textured with a combed pattern on the unglazed inside. The outside is usually glazed a rich, warm brown. The textured interior of the "mortar"

acts like the surface of a grater, making the <u>suribachi</u> more efficient and easier to use than a conventional mortar. They come in various sizes.

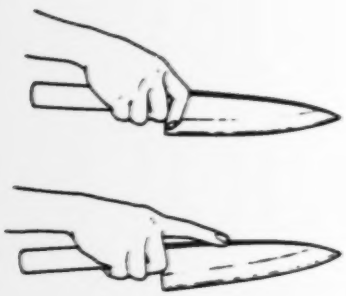
knives--Three knives do most of the work.



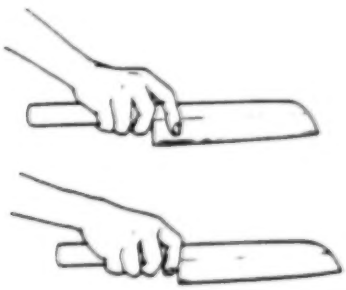
kitchen cleavers

vegetable knives

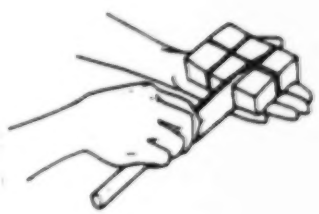
sashimi slicers



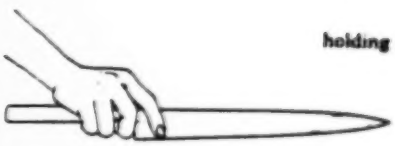
holding a kitchen cleaver



holding a vegetable knife

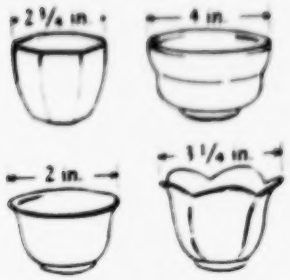


cutting tofu



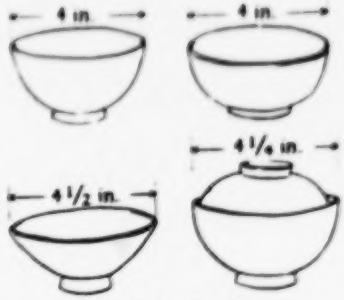
holding a *sashimi* slicer

The pictures below show various kinds of Japanese dishes. See the section on Table Settings for further information as to how they are used.



deep dishes (*otsubo*)

salad



soup and rice bowls

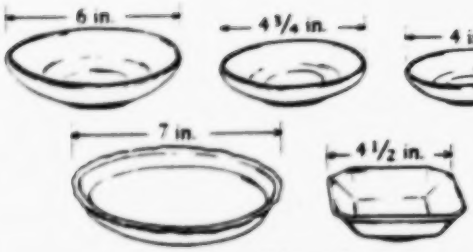
soup bowl (lacquer)

noodle bowl

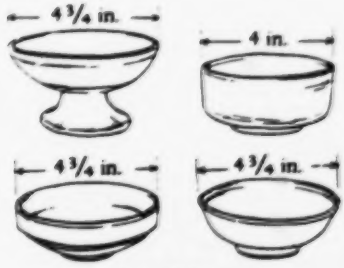
noodle bowl

multipurpose dishes

the larger forms can be used to serve appetizers, *sashimi*, and grilled and deep-fried foods
the small containers are for appetizers, salads, nibbles, sauces, etc.



plates (*hirazara*)



dishes (*fukazara*)

COOKING METHODS

Japanese food is all cooked on the stove-top; an oven is never used. There are five traditional cooking methods: boiling, grilling, deep-frying, steaming, and serving raw. "Serving raw" is considered a cooking method, because although the food is not cooked, preparation (in terms of peeling, slicing, etc.) is still required.

The ideal Japanese meal has at least one dish cooked in each manner. Color is also a factor; there are five colors: green, yellow, red, white, and black. "Black" means the dark purple of an eggplant or some kinds of cabbage. The ideal meal involves a balance of these colors, cooking methods, and a balance of the six tastes: bitter, sour, sweet, hot, salty, and mild.

In addition to the importance of setting a proper place, which is equally important in the West, the arrangement of the food on the plate itself is also important: dishes are filled to two-thirds of their capacity. One reason for this is to not obscure the pattern on the surface of the dish.

TABLE SETTINGS

In setting a Japanese table, the location of dishes and utensils is as important as it is in Western cuisine. The diagram below shows a general schematic for a table setting.

PICKLES SIDE DISH

RICE BOWL SOUP

CHOPSTICKS

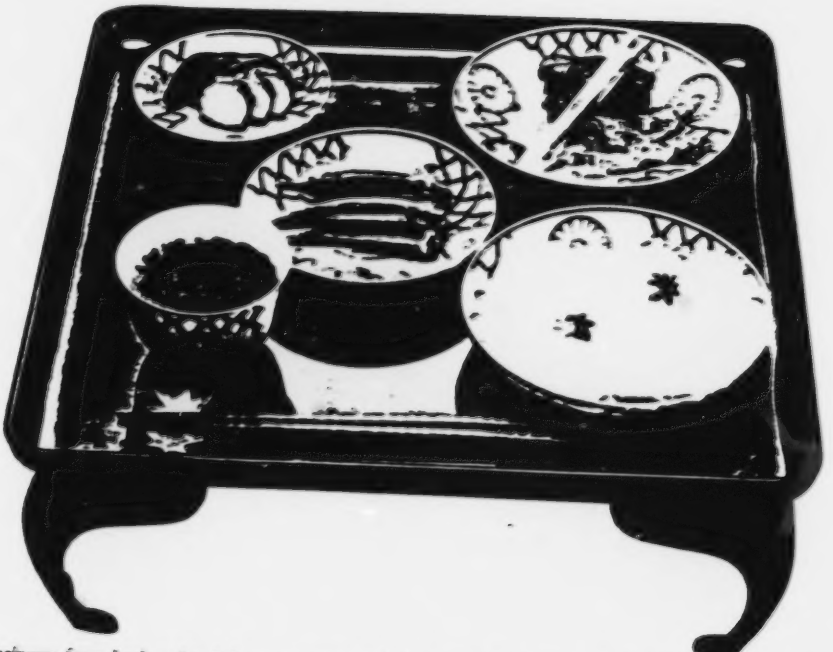
This arrangement may differ slightly: for example, when noodles are served, the noodles themselves go where the soup usually goes, and the dipping sauce goes where the rice usually goes. This is because the noodles are eaten after dipping in the sauce--that is, when they are left.

The principle difference between the Japanese arrangement and the western arrangement is that in the American arrangement, the meat is always placed directly in front of the eater; in Japan, the meat is placed off to the right. Another difference is that chopsticks are placed directly in front of the eater, instead of off to the side like silverware in the western tradition.

The following pages show some sample table settings that vary from season to season. Usually, the pattern of the dishes is changed according to the season--for example, maple leaf-pattern for fall, plum blossom-pattern for spring--as well as the type of food served.

Spring Tray Setting

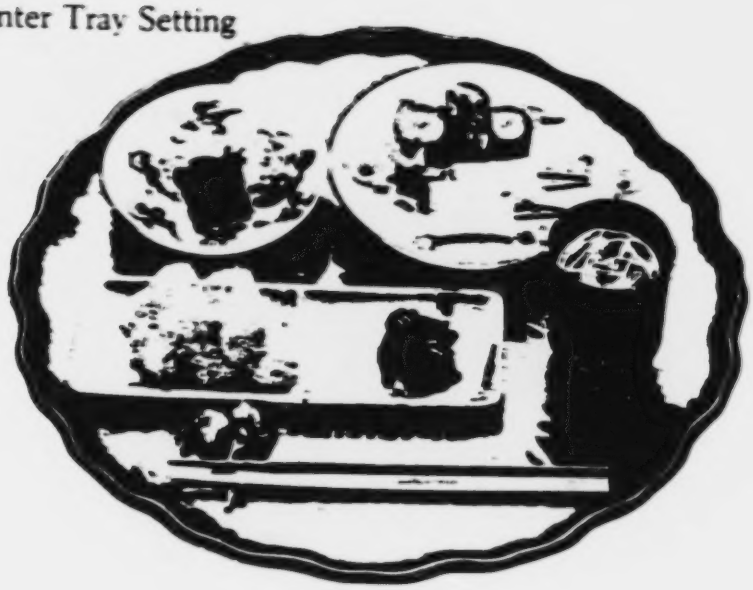
Summer Tray Setting



(*clockwise from back right*) dish containing pickled ginger shoots (available bottled), Braised *Shiitake* Mushrooms (page 144), and Jade Nuggets (page 156); Cold Somen Noodles and Dipping Sauce (page 125); Simmered Okra (use okra instead of eggplant, page 119); pickles: Cucumbers in Miso (page 41) and Nara Pickle (available commercially)

Autumn Tray Setting

Winter Tray Setting



MODULE 4: FOOD AND CULTURE

FOOD AND CULTURE

We can see from this sampling of Japanese cuisine that it is very different from American cuisine. Some of this is due to the fact that geography and climate affect the availability of certain foods, and some of it is just different for no reason we can pinpoint. One of the differences is, of course, that in Japan chopsticks are used to eat. We may say "Yeah, so what?", but this small difference is an expression of what is perhaps a larger cultural difference. In Japan, manual dexterity is much prized, partly because a certain amount of manual dexterity is needed to eat with chopsticks, and partly because in order to write the Japanese language with a brush (as it used to be written all the time), a great deal of manual dexterity is needed. Strength is not considered to be as important as dexterity; we can see this in the fact that boxing, which needs strength, is not as popular as martial arts, which require more physical dexterity. This is just one example of a way that a small item--or in the case of chopsticks, two small items--can have a very large cultural significance.

JAPANESE AND CHINESE FOOD AND RESTAURANTS

Oriental food has become increasingly popular in the U.S., but not much care is taken to distinguish Japanese food from Chinese food, or to tell a Japanese restaurant from a Chinese restaurant. In terms of physical appearance of the restaurant, Japanese restaurants are usually earth and wood colored--brown and beige--while Chinese restaurants are usually decorated in red, which is considered to be a good luck color.

A Chinese meal is ordered in terms of dishes: usually one dish is ordered for each person, and then the food is shared. On the other hand, each person orders his own Japanese meal, which comes with rice, pickles, and soup. Chinese food frequently has a sauce, and Japanese food almost never does. These are some of the ways to tell Japanese food and Chinese food apart.

Under "Sources of Supply", sample menus from two restaurants in New Haven are included; this will give you an idea of the names and types of dishes you can find in a Japanese restaurant. It is important to realize that the types of dishes found on the menu of a Japanese restaurant in the U.S. is different from the types of dishes found on the menu of a Japanese restaurant in Japan.

SOURCES OF SUPPLY

China Trading Company, 271 Crown Street, New Haven. 865-9465. As the name indicates, this store specializes in Chinese food, but they also have a fair selection of Japanese food, as well as fresh oriental vegetables.

East-West Trading Company, 68 Howe Street, New Haven. 777-2117. This store has a good selection of Korean food, as well as some Japanese food. It is a good place to buy dishes and utensils.

Oriental Pantry, 374 Whitney Avenue, New Haven. 865-2849. The best selection of Japanese food is found here. This is also a good source for cookbooks, dishes, and utensils. The people who work here are familiar with the food items, and will answer any questions you might have; in addition, they will tell you how to cook food you might not be familiar with. They have the best selection of oriental vegetables of the three stores, and also stock several kinds of tōfu.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

*AjiCommunications on Japan's Dietary Culture. Published by the Public Relations Department of Ajinomoto Company, Inc., bi-monthly from November, 1979 to February 1983. An amazing collection of articles by well-known Japanese and foreign food experts. There are some self-serving articles in here, but most are good, and provide information about Japanese food and culture that is unavailable elsewhere.

Itoh, Joan. 1976. Rice Paddy Gourmet. Tokyo: The Japan Times. This is a collection of columns that first appeared in The Japan Times. A good source of cultural information about food. The author lived for several years in a country village in Northern Japan.

Nihon Tōkei Nenkan. (Japan Statistical Yearbook). Tokyo: Nihon Tōkei Kyōkai. Statistics on every aspect of Japan; published yearly.

Statistical Abstract of the United States. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Starred items may be found in the Yale University East Asian Outreach Office.

*Tsuji, Shizuo. 1980. Japanese Cooking: A Simple Art. Tokyo: Kodansha International. Foreword by M.F.K. Fisher. A complete Japanese cookbook, written for foreigners who are interested in Japanese food. There are simple recipes, and more complex ones, all written in an easy to understand manner.

Yoneda, Soei. 1982. Good Food From A Japanese Temple. Tokyo: Kodansha International. Written by a Buddhist nun, this book is a collection of vegetarian recipes. Many of the recipes are not typical, because it is temple food, but the taste is authentic, and Yoneda's comments on food and its place in Japanese culture are unequalled.

JAPANESE UTENSILS BOX

This is a list of the items which can be found in the accompanying artifact kit which is available from the Outreach Program of the Council on East Asian Studies at Yale University. This list may also be used to assemble a kit of your own.

A - 1. rice bowls (a,b)

A - 2. soup bowls (with lids) (a,b,c,d)

A - 3. oshibori holder (a,b) and oshibori (c,d). Oshibori are used to wipe the hands at a Japanese restaurant.

A - 4. chawanmushi (custard bowls) (a,b,c,d). Chawanmushi is a main dish, not a dessert.

A - 5. pickle plates (a,b)

A - 6. noodle bowls (a,b)

A - 7. cooking chopsticks (three sets in three lengths)

A - 8. hirazara (plates) (a,b)

A - 9. sushi mat, for making sushi.

A -10. retangular plates (a,b)

A -11. o-hashi holders

A -12. o-hashi (chopsticks) (a,b)

A -13. teapot and six cups (a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h)

A -14. rice cooker (a) and rice paddle (b)

A -15. oban (tray) for place settings

JAPANESE FOOD BOX

This is a list of the foods you will need to prepare the recipes in this unit. A kit containing these food items, with the exception of the perishable items, is available from the Outreach Program of the Council on East Asian Studies at Yale University.

B - 1. instant dashi (stock), katsuo flakes
B - 2. kanpyo (dried gourd strips)
B - 3. konnyaku (perishable)
B - 4. mirin
B - 5. miso
B. -6. enokidake (mushrooms)
B - 7. shiitake (dried mushrooms)
B - 8. soba (noodles) (and chasoba)
B - 9. udon (noodles)
B -10. kishimen (noodles)
B -11. somen (noodles)
B -12. rice
B -13. sake (not in kit)
B -14. konbu (seaweed)
B -15. nori (seaweed)
B -16. wakame (seaweed)
B -17. shoga (ginger root)
B -18. soy sauce
B -19. instant tofu
B -20. tsukemono (pickles):umeboshi and ginger pickles
B -21. wasabi (hot horseradish sauce)
B -22. tea
B -23. shichimi

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Karen Kay is presently a graduate student in the Linguistics Department at Yale University. She expects to finish her dissertation on the development of Japanese verbal and adjectival inflections from the eighth to the fifteenth centuries in the summer of 1986. Ms. Kay lived in Japan from 1973 to 1976, and during that time ate her way from one end of the country to the other.